

UK city of Leicester sees lockdown tightened on virus spike

June 30 2020, by Pan Pylas



A worker for Leicester City Council disinfects public toilets in Leicester, England, Monday June 29, 2020. The central England city of Leicester is waiting to find out if lockdown restrictions will be extended as a result of a spike in coronavirus infections. (Joe Giddens/PA via AP)

The British government is reimposing an array of lockdown restrictions, including the closure of schools, in the central city of Leicester after a

spike in coronavirus infections.

Health Secretary Matt Hancock told lawmakers late Monday after a series of meetings, including one chaired by Prime Minister Boris Johnson, that in addition to the school closures, shops that don't sell essential goods, such as food and medicines, will have to shutter themselves again, barely two weeks after they reopened.

He said the [government](#) had to take "difficult but [important decisions](#)" for the benefit of Leicester's population, which is thought to number around 350,000.

"Local action like this is an important tool in our armoury to deal with outbreaks while we get the country back on its feet," he said.

The re-imposition of lockdown restrictions for Leicester—the biggest local tightening taken by the government—went further than had been anticipated and is likely to prove a cause for concern among the city's highly diverse population and those who were looking to reopen their businesses this Saturday.

While confirming that Leicester won't be joining in the easing of the lockdown this Saturday when pubs and restaurants are due to reopen in England, Hancock said further actions were necessary to get a grip on the local outbreak that's seen the city account for 10% of all positive cases in the country over the past week. Hospital admissions are between six and 10 a day, also higher than in other places, he added.



A man cleans the windows of a launderette in Leicester, England, Monday June 29, 2020. The central England city of Leicester is waiting to find out if lockdown restrictions will be extended as a result of a spike in coronavirus infections. (Joe Giddens/PA via AP)

Hancock said non-essential retailers, such as department stores and electronic retailers, will have to close again from Tuesday, two weeks after they reopened. In addition, he said schools will have to close from Thursday as children have been particularly hit during this outbreak. They will remain open for vulnerable children though. He also said that travel to, from and within the city will have to be curtailed and social distancing rules will be monitored.

"The more people follow the rules, the faster we'll get control of this

virus and get Leicester back to normal," he said. "The virus thrives on social contact and we know reducing [social contact](#) controls its spread and precise and targeted actions like these will give the virus nowhere to hide and help us defeat this invisible killer."

The lockdown in Leicester will be reviewed in two weeks.



Britain's Prime Minister Boris Johnson in a science room under construction during a visit to the construction site of Ealing Fields High School in west London, Monday June 29, 2020. (Toby Melville/Pool via AP)

Concerns over Leicester have mounted in recent days following the increase in cases, though there has been some confusion as to the

government's intentions following a weekend of mixed messages that appeared to come as a surprise to local officials.

Hancock said the government was providing extra testing capacity in the city and that Leicester's "proud diversity" will be taken into account, notably in the translation of the new guidelines into all relevant languages.

Ahead of the meetings Monday, Leicester's mayor, Peter Soulsby, said he had yet to be persuaded that the city is faring any worse than other places in England, and sharply criticized the British government over its handling of the situation

The U.K. has recorded 43,575 coronavirus-related deaths, the highest by far in Europe. The government, which sets the [coronavirus](#) response for England, has said it won't hesitate to reimpose lockdown restrictions on a specific region in the event of a local outbreak.



Britain's Prime Minister Boris Johnson talks with year 10 pupil Vedant Jitesh during a visit to the construction site of Ealing Fields High School in west London, Monday June 29, 2020. (Toby Melville/Pool via AP)



Britain's Prime Minister Boris Johnson visits the construction site of Ealing Fields High School in west London, Monday June 29, 2020. (Toby Melville/Pool via AP)



Britain's Prime Minister Boris Johnson talks with year 10 pupils Vedant Jitesh and Eryn Davies during a visit to the construction site of Ealing Fields High School in west London, Monday June 29, 2020. (Toby Melville/Pool via AP)



In this Wednesday, April 29, 2020 file photo, Britain's Health Secretary Matt Hancock arrives in Downing Street in London. The British government has reimposed lockdown restrictions in the English city of Leicester after a spike in coronavirus infections, including the closure of shops that don't sell essential goods and schools. In a statement in Parliament, Health Secretary Matt Hancock said the government won't be recommending that the city joins in the easing of the lockdown in England that is due to take place on Saturday, July 4, which includes the reopening of pubs and restaurants. (AP Photo/Kirsty Wigglesworth, File)

"We are concerned about Leicester, we are concerned about any local outbreak," Prime Minister Boris Johnson said earlier Monday while on a visit to a construction site in London.

"I want to stress to people that we are not out of the woods yet."

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